



## A Vision for Boston: Questions for the 2009 Mayoral Candidates

### DAY 4: SCHOOL DROPOUTS

*Student truancy and dropout rates remain a significant problem in Boston. Considering the financial constraints the City will face over the next few years, what would you propose to ensure that all students attend school regularly, and graduate from high school? How would you fund these programs?*



#### Michael F. Flaherty Jr.

Superintendent Johnson has taken some important steps to address the dropout crisis. Nevertheless, more can - and should be - done. For example, monitoring of all students should begin as early as the second grade, when intervention would be more effective. In addition, this monitoring data must be regularly shared with teachers as a way to help them provide their students with the most appropriate support they require. We must also reinvest in year-round youth employment efforts, mentoring and tutoring programs, and financial literacy training and overhaul our English language learner and special education programs, both of which serve populations at highest risk for dropping out and who have been significantly failed by BPS to date. Intensified support for transfer students and stronger transitional programs for students entering ninth grade is also required to successfully turn around our dropout crisis.

Solving the dropout crisis is a priority we cannot shortchange and we can help fund these prevention initiatives by decentralizing the Boston Public Schools and redirecting money currently spent at the central office back into the classroom.

#### Thomas M. Menino

Superintendent Carol Johnson has made "graduation for all" the district's top priority, with exciting programs to ensure that every student is prepared for college and career success. We commissioned a comprehensive study of the dropout challenge, which provided compelling data about risk factors. Guided by that report, our systematic approach is reducing the dropout rate, targeting new programs to key populations:

- Students who are just one or two courses from graduation are more likely to drop out than enroll in another year of school. *Credit recovery* programs are helping those students complete their classes and graduate in their senior year. Since 2008, more than 400 students – most of them potential dropouts – earned diplomas through this program.
- High school students arriving in the U.S. knowing little English are significantly more likely to drop out. *Newcomers Academy* provides these students with a transition program, preparing them socially and academically for high school while developing English skills.
- We're reaching out to students who have dropped out to bring them back to school. The *Re-Engagement Center* helps former dropouts and chronically truant students make a successful re-entry through tutoring, counseling and other services, putting them back on track to graduation.